L'Occitane Ingredients: True Stories

Inspired by his childhood in Provence, the 23-year-old Olivier Baussan decided to recreate the traditions of his region. After purchasing a steam distiller, a relic from the past, Olivier harvested wild rosemary and produced pure rosemary essential oil. He sold this essential oil at local markets, the product was quickly embraced by villagers, and L'Occitane was born.

L'Occitane products represent the traditions and values of the Mediterranean region. Every year, Olivier seeks out traditional techniques and ingredients once used in the region to ensure the well-being of the body, mind, and spirit. The results of these efforts are embodied in L'Occitane's annual Harvest collections, Shea Butter range, Aromachologie products, and Immortelle skin care.

L'Occitane is true to itself and its founding principles, offering authenticity and effective products designed to procure true well-being. Here are the true stories behind the development of the brand's products.

Shea
The landscape of Burkina Faso is interspersed with majestic karite trees—the source of shea butter. In this region, the hot winds carry dust and fine sand, and can be very drying for the skin. The women of Burkina Faso traditionally protect their skin—and that of their children—against harsh environmental elements by applying shea butter daily. They extract and dry the nuts, grind them to make a fine paste, and transform the paste into shea butter—a universal and irreplaceable beauty product. This explains why their skin remains so beautiful and supple.

Traceability: “Thanks to the incredible success of our Shea Butter range, the number of women producing shea butter for L’Occitane has gone from an initial group of less than 100 to over 12,000 today!”
—Olivier Baussan, L’Occitane Founder

Lavender
Otherwise known as "blue gold," lavender is an aromatic tribute to Provence. It's the fragrant soul of the region and the fruit of respectful labor. In accordance with tradition, every summer young Provençal villagers go hiking on the sunny hills to pick lavender at a high altitude.

In Provence, it's fine lavender, lavandula angustifolia, which yields the best essential oil, renowned for its delicate perfume. It's very different from the lavandin perfume, with camphor notes.

Traceability: In the village of Sault, Fabrice Fournel, vice president of the Simiane-la-Rotonde cooperative, works as a lavender farmer. “The first day,” says Fabrice, “the smell of the flowers is so strong, it makes us dizzy.” Working with his associate, Jérôme, and his parents, he goes from one row of lavender to the next, cutting the stems, then uses a fork to lay them out in the sun so that they can dry for a day or two before being taken to the distillery.

Verbena
Verbena is a shrub that's typical of the Mediterranean basin. In June, as baskets are filled with the freshly harvested green leaves, the markets in Provence are heavy with the scent of verbena. Its fresh, lemony fragrance is carried for miles around.

When summer arrives and the weather gets hotter, verbena leaves are used for herbal iced teas or tangy sorbets.

This refreshing sensation is at the heart of the verbena collection—a vibrant, radiant range to revive both the body and mind!

Traceability: In the Costa Verde, Albrecht Von Keyserlingk, a distiller of aromatic plants in Corsica, makes a range of products using verbena: essential oils, macerated oils, and floral waters. "It's the finest, most subtle lemony nuance there could be. A delicious and volatile freshness."
For Albrecht, there are two verbena harvests each year—one at the beginning of summer, the other in early autumn.

**Almond**
The almond flower, which typically blooms between February and March, is one of the earliest of the year. Fields are covered with pink and white blossoms, creating a beautiful sight.

In Provence, the almond tree was considered to be a strong, noble, and majestic tree. From the 1930s onwards, the cultivation of almond trees was abandoned, threatened by the mechanization of agriculture and the introduction of new and more profitable crops. The almond tree became scarce in the region. L’Occitane wants to put this emblematic tree back where it deserves to be on the Provençal landscape.

**Traceability:** L’Occitane uses almonds grown in the south of France by places such as the family farm of Monsieur Jaubert, an almond grower on the Valensole plateau, in the Alps of Haute-Provence.

Monsieur Jaubert: “To this day, I have planted 10,000 almond trees—my contribution to helping the planet. The trees teach us wisdom and respect. If you look after them well, they will thank you and give good yields.”

**Cherry Blossom**
“Flying in the first breeze of spring, cherry blossom is so rare and precious,” says Olivier Baussan. The cherry tree is part of the Provençal landscape. It’s widespread in the Apt region of Luberon, and changes colors with the seasons, making it a source of inspiration for artists. Pure white in spring, bright red in summer, soft green in autumn...L’Occitane celebrates the poetic beauty of the cherry blossom and its delicate, feminine flowers during the first days of spring.

**Pivoine Flora**
The peony is a famous flower that grows naturally around the Mediterranean Basin. Every spring, it offers a dazzling carnival of colors and scents.

**Traceability:** Jean-Luc Rivière—a man with a passion for peonies—and his family have been devoted to breeding and cultivating peonies for 160 years in the Drôme region of France. Following Mr. Rivière’s advice, L’Occitane developed an extract of peony root, which perfumes all peony products.

“We’ve fallen in love with the peony in all its incarnations.”

—Jean-Luc Rivière, nurseryman in the Drôme region

**Fleur Chérie**
Fleur chérie, which translates to “cherished flower,” pays homage to the orange blossom, a symbol of the Mediterranean, and neroli. Its floral water, rich in benefits, is a precious companion for every family. It welcomes guests with its luminous scent and softens the skin.

The fragrance collection infuses the sweet, delicate scent of orange blossom in a sparkling, airy, floral fragrance and lingering woody notes.

**Aromachologie**
Aromachologie has taught us an important lesson: plants have amazing powers and many things to teach us. For 30 years, L’Occitane has developed formulas made with essential oils. Provence offers an abundance of the delicate, mysterious plants.

Purifying, relaxing, revitalizing...L’Occitane formulates hair products, as well as products for the bath and home, which contain a combination of essential oils. It also offers blends of pure essential oils, which you can mix with neutral bases to obtain the desired effect.
Traceability: Yves Millou keeps L’Occitane’s large Provençal herbal up to date. A trained chemist and a botanist at heart, he knows all about plants, their origins and properties, but also about the incredible power of their fragrance alone. In 1980, Yves Millou began to extract plant essential oils for L’Occitane. These precious essences capture the effects of a plant in its highest concentration and he measures and combines them drop by drop.

*Information provided by L’Occitane.*